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THE TEMPERANCE QUES-
TION.

The following communication on
one of the most difficult problems
of the day will be read with interest
by those engaged in the liquor
traffic, as well as those who are de-
voting their efforts to the suppres-
sion of drunkenness:

Messrs. A. S. Abell & Co.: There
is in the September number of the
Nineteenth Century an article by
Mme. Olga Novikoff on "The Tem-
perance Movement in Russia," from
which I have made the following
extracts, which may be interesting
and suggestive to those who are
laboring for the diminution of
drunkenness in this country and in
this state. It appears that in Rus-
sia, as in the United States, the
problem of how to deal successfully
with the national vice of intemper-
ance is regarded as a question of the
first importance, and the govern-
ment and the church are both ac-
tively engaged in trying to solve it.

It is encouraging to note that the
principle of local option, which is
now being so successfully applied in
the different counties of Maryland, is
approved by the commission of ex-
perts convened by the Russian gov-
ernment to decide upon the best
means of diminishing intemper-
ance. Their first suggestion was
"That liberty be given to the com-
munes to close all places for the
sale of drink within the communal
limits." Another point to be noted
is that the clergy are taking the
lead in the temperance reform
movement in Russia, not being de-
terred, as many of the American
clergy seem to be, by the fear of
being implicated in a political move-
ment.

In Russia, as in England and the
United States, the conviction is
rapidly gaining ground that drunk-
enness and the traffic which makes
it possible, must be dealt with, not
only by every means of moral
suasion, but also by the law, which
in this country, at least, is only the
sentiment of the majority expressed
authoritatively.

For civilized communities to re-
main indifferent to the ravages of
this vice, is not only inhuman and
unchristian; it is fatal and wasteful
folly. Drunkenness is so much
force subtracted from production
and contributed to criminal activ-
ity, for which waste and destruction
the sober portion of society has to
pay the cost. It is surely time for
sober men to endeavor to emanci-
pate themselves from the necessity
of paying for others' vices, even if
they did not acknowledge the high-
er obligation of seeking to rescue
their fellow-men from self-destruc-
tion and to protect the innocent do-
mestic victims of this deadly and
brutalizing vice.

Very Respectfully,
LAWRENCE TURNBULL.

"After the death of the late em-
peror, the movement against drunk-
enness suddenly reappeared even
stronger than before. In the out-
burst of sorrow caused by that 'par-
ricide,' as it was sometimes called
by the lower classes, many village
communes determined, as a sign of
their grief, to close the drink-
ing shops. In three places in the
government of Pskoff a resolu-
tion to this effect was signed by
227 heads of families, and it was
decided to close compulsorily all
the public houses, which had
been taking 50,000 roubles a year
from the population. In the gov-
ernment of Pensa, where the gov-
ernor had energetically striven to
close these shops, the villagers de-
clared in favor of abolishing them
forever. Three villages in the gov-
ernment of Vilna, moved chiefly by
religious motives, did the same
thing; general sympathy greeting
that movement, for, as a rule, the
smaller the number of drinking
shops the greater is the prosperity
of the place. According to an in-
teresting monograph of M. M.
Bektieff and Khlyostoff on the
economical position of Velez in
the Ural, an examination of nine-
teen communities showed that as a
rule the number of ruined homes
corresponded to the number of pub-
lic houses in the commune."

The wine shops are now
regarded as the village cancers.

"One of the first acts of the new
reign was the appointment of a com-
mittee at the ministry of finance to
decide what steps should be taken
to prevent the abuse of spirituous
liquors. This committee, after
eleven sittings in August and Sep-
tember, drew up a scheme of tem-
perance reform, which, in accord-
ance with the excellent rules adopted
by the Emperor, was submitted to
a special commission of experts,
selected from the Zemstvos of the
empire, for their special acquaint-
ance with the subject to be dis-
cussed. There were thirty-two
members of this commission, to
whom two were subsequently
added by vote of the commission,
under the title of special ex-
perts. The session of this tem-
perance reform parliament was opened
by Gen. Ignatieff, on the 24th of
September at the ministry of
finance. In his address, after ex-
plaining the desire of the govern-
ment that the representatives of the
Zemstvos should be consulted be-
fore any legislation was undertaken,
he referred to the question of in-
temperance as follows: 'The sale
of spirits in Russia, under the ex-
isting conditions, tended rather to
the abuse of liquor and to the ruin
of the people than to the satisfac-
tion of any of the needs of the
latter. The government is resolved
to take efficacious measures to put
an end to this sad state of things, and
it hopes that you will aid it in dis-
covering the method of doing this
without injuring the revenue.'"

The sittings of the commission

were held daily, and the discussions
were followed with the keenest
interest throughout the country.
Specialists who were not included
in the original commission were
summoned to give evidence before
it. All the information in pos-
session of the administration was at
the service of the experts. The dis-
cussions were occasionally inter-
rupted by the reading of telegrams
from distant Zemstvos, urging the
commission to adopt the most string-
ent measures against the brandy
shops. Peasants, who arrived with
petitions from local assemblies,
were heard in person before the
committee in support of their
prayers.

The recommendations of this
commission of experts may thus be
summarized: 1. Liberty to the
communes to close all places for the
sale of drink within the communal
limits. 2. Permission to be given
to the communes to establish com-
munal monopolies of the sale of
drink. 3. No public houses to be
established above 25 per cent. in ex-
cess of one per thousand of the
population, and that only with the
consent of the Zemstvo. 4. Tea and
food to be consumed at all places
where drink is consumed on the
premises. 5. Licenses to be
granted by contract, and the price
in excess of the minimum fixed by
law to be divided according to the
wants of the agricultural popula-
tions. 6. Rigorous supervision of
the public houses by the local
authorities. * * * What will be
the fate of these recommendations I
do not know. They represent not
the decisions of an authoritative
body, but the recommendations of
an imperial commission. It may be
that these experts, in their anxiety
to realize an ideal of Mr. Gladstone
—that of legislating so as to make
it easy to do right and difficult to do
wrong—may have aimed too high,
seeking rather what ought to be
than what is possible to accomplish.
But these views are notable as
those of honest, experienced Rus-
sians on one of the greatest ques-
tions of the day. Perhaps it is even
the greatest. So it certainly ap-
pears to many in my country. 'The
emancipation of the peasant from
drunkenness,' they say, 'is as great a
work as his emancipation from serf-
dom.' If this seems fanatical to
any in England, people should re-
member that the Russians never do
things by halves, and that even En-
glishmen, as far apart as Mr. Col-
den and Prof. Huxley, agree that,
in the words of the former, 'the tem-
perance cause lies at the foundation
of all social and political reform.'
Prof. Huxley, indeed, has declared,
'Talk of political questions? There
lies beneath all these questions the
great question whether that profligate
miser which dogs the foot-
steps of modern civilization shall be
allowed to exist. I believe this is
the great political question of the
future.' There are many who ques-
tion the possibility of dealing so
summarily with a source of so much
revenue. But the Russian national
party replies with Mr. Gladstone,
that 'fiscal grounds must neces-
sarily be secondary. The question
ought to be decided entirely on so-
cial and moral grounds.'

"We have our total prohibition-
ists as well as you. The experts,
however, concluded that if the feel-
ing in favor of local prohibition is
strong, it will be enough to allow it
to be legally enforced. If the local
feeling is adverse to complete pro-
hibition, a decree of the central
government would only be evaded
and fall into contempt. * * *

There is another direction in which
the temperance movement is work-
ing, and that is by appealing to the
people to abstain from drink."

"The orthodox church
has energetically co-operated with
the national government in the
work of moral reformation. The
Holy Synod has issued striking little
tracts and hand-bills explaining the
evils of intemperance, illustrating
them by anatomical plates, and it is
interesting to see the crowds gather
round these placards in the streets,
reading the synodical appeal and
discussing the illustrations. A still
more promising effort is being made
by the clergy. In each parish it
is proposed to form—in
some parishes it is already in
full working—a kind of Parish
Improvement Society, under the
presidency of the priests, for the
moral, intellectual and social amelior-
ation of the condition of the
people. At Vilna, where one of
these protective societies, as they
are called, is in full working order,
the members of the society under-
take the surveillance of public
houses. They compel them to close
at 9 o'clock every night. They
make periodical visits to all the
drinking places, and if they find
any one intoxicated they immedi-
ately take him home. On the first
occasion the drunkard is admon-
ished before his family; in the second
he is publicly rebuked, and in the
third he is compelled to pay a
slight fine. These societies also
take a great interest in getting the
children to school and in organ-
izing charitable relief. Particulars
of the constitution and object, and
mode of working of the society at
Vilna have been sent to every
parish priest in Russia, in the hope
that similar action may be taken in
every village of the empire."

"Free newspapers, temperance
placards, cheap tea, parish improve-
ment societies are not all the means
used to combat intemperance. In
Russia, as elsewhere, people drink
very often from mere idleness.
Drink is their only recreation. So,
to provide cheap amusement is to
create a powerful rival to the at-
tractions of the drink-shops. It is
with this end in view that steps
have been taken by the municipal
council of St. Petersburg and the
police to found in the capital a
popular theatre, to be maintained

by the municipality, and to create
for the masses an alternative to the
debasing pleasure of intemperance.
Similar proposals have been made
elsewhere; but, of course, even at
the best, theatres can only be estab-
lished in large towns. In small
places reading rooms and tea-houses
are all that can be provided."—
Baltimore Sun.

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